# THE JOURNAL OF THE BIHAR RESEARCH SOCIETY

VOL. XLVIII ] JANUARY-DECEMBER, 1962 [ PARTS I-IV


## SECTION III

# TANTRA WORKS OF MITHILĀ


*By*

*Prof. Chintaharan Chakravarti*


Mithilā or North Bihar, celebrated seat of Sanskrit learning and Brahmanic culture from hoary antiquity, is believed to have been closely associated with the development of the religion of the Tantras. There is a popular couplet[1] which says that the tantra-lore originated in Bengal, was developed by the people of Mithilā, flourished to some extent in Mahārāṣtra and met with its end in Gurjara. Whatever be the intrinsic merit of the statement it definitely testifies to the popularity of the Tantra-form of worship in the region. And Mithilā is proud of a good number of Saints who attained to spiritual eminence through Tantra rituals. Of these Gaṅgeśa, the father of neo-Indian Logic, is said to have as an unlettered young man aquired brilliance in the subject through the grace of Kālī, the Mother Goddess, whom he propitiated by practising difficult Tantric rites in the cemetry outside his village.[2] The story of his boyhood and spiritual uplift as handed down by tradition is related in the form of a dramatic composition[3] in Bengali by a well-known Tantra scholar of

---

1. गौडे प्रकाशिता विद्या मैथिलैः प्रबलीकृता ।
क्वचित् क्वचिन्महाराष्ट्रे गुर्जरे प्रलयं गता ।।
Quoted by R. C. Chanda in his Indo-Aryan Races, p. 153 f. n. It appears to be based on a similar verse with regard to the spread of devotion found in the Padmapurāna (Uttarakhanda, Ch. 193. V. 51).
उत्पन्ना द्राविडे साहं वृद्धिं कर्णाटके गता ।
क्वचित् क्वचिन्महाराष्ट्रे गुर्जरे जीर्णतां गता ।।
2. S. C. Vidyabhushan, History of Indian Logic, p. 406.
3. Gangesa, Calcutta, 1305 B. S. (1898 A. D.). The work, however, has no reference to the scholarship or scholarly activities of the saint.

Bengal, Pandit Siva Chandra Vidyarnava, preceptor Sir John Woodroffe, who by his writings brought to the notice of the world of scholars the value and importance of the Tantras. Some of the other Saints are Devāditya, Vardhamāna, Madana Upādhyāya, Gaṇanātha Upādhyāya etc.[4]

Mithilā had also her share of contribution to the literature of the Tantras, consisting mainly of works dealing with ritualistic details. This has not yet received the attention it deserves at the hands of scholars.[5] I propose to give here short accounts[6] of some of these works, two of which have so far been published and an edition of a third work is reported to be under publication. A critical analysis of these works will give an idea of the type of literature and religion of the Tantras current in Mithilā. It is curious that the *Prapañcasāra* is scarcely mentioned in these works though there are many references to the *Śāradātilaka* which is a much later work. The *Mahākālasaṃhitā* which is held in great esteem is occasionally referred to. The available manuscript material of this work is however very scanty.

Devanātha Ṭhakkura, a versatile scholar and son of another great scholar Govinda by name, was the author of two works, the *Mantrakaumudī*[7] and the *Tantrakaumudī* both of which deal with the details of Tantra-worship in general. He wrote a number of other works on different subjects and is popularly known as *Saptakaumudīkāra*, author of seven works with titles ending with the word Kaumudī. The *Ālokapariśiṣṭa*, a work on Nyāya, is outside the range of the *Kaumudīs*. Devanātha flourished in the beginning of the 16th century.[8] He begins his *Mantrakaumudī* with a short genealogical account and ends it by an enumeration of the works consulted for its preparation. We have here quite a number of litle-known titles. A number of digests and a few authors are cited but it is difficult to connect them. The two names fortunately occur together at least in two cases ( 114.76, 117.21 ) associating Bhaṭṭanāga with two

4. Jayakanta Mishra, History of Maithili Literature, Vol. I, pp. 20-1.
5. A survey of the Tantra Mss. of Mithila on the lines of Vedic, Dharmasāstra and Kāvya Manuscripts would have been useful in this connection. Vide Descriptive Catalogue of Mss. in Mithila, Vols, I-III, Published by the Bihar Research Society, Patna.
6. I am indebted to Prof. Anantlal Thakur of the Mithila Research Institute for valuable help in collecting materials in this connection.
7. Edited by Prof. Ramanath Jha in the Mithila Research Institute series of Darbhanga ( 1960 ). Prof. Jha is engaged in the work of editing the Tantrakaumudi.
8. D. C. Bhattacharya, History of Navya Nyāya in Mithilā, pp. 189 ff.

works, e.g., *Tripurāsārasamgraha* and *Sārasamuccaya*. *Pūjāpradīpa* may be the work of the same name by Govinda Ṭhakkura, the author's father (?).

The *Āgamādvaitanirṇaya* may be a work by Devanātha's elder brother, Vidyāpati, sought to be identified with the famous Maithil poet of the same name.[9] The author in the beginning of his work bows down to Govinda, a name which may have a covert hint to his father of the same name. The nature of the contents of the work is not clear from the available meagre description of its manuscript.

The *Tārābhaktisudhārṇava* of Narasiṃha is complete in twenty chapters in manuscripts described by R. L. Mitra ( *Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts*, X. 3312 ) and Peterson *Catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts in the Library of His Highness the Maharaja of Ulwar*, No. 2146, Extract No. 625 ). It has been published in the Tantrik Texts Series ( No. XXI ) apparently in an incomplete and truncated form with eleven chapters, almost half the original size of the work, without making any reference to its remaining portion. It deals with the worship not only of Tārā alone as its title would imply but of other forms of Śakti as well. Chapter XI as found in a manuscript, with an alternative title *Kālibhaktisudhārṇava*, in the Mithila Research Institute of Darbhanga, deals with the daily worship of Kālī. The justification of introducing Kālī in a work on Tārā is stated to be the identity of both the deities.[10] The genealogy of the author is given in the concluding verse[11] of the manuscripts described by Mitra and Peterson. We learn from it that Narasiṃha was the son of Gadādhara[12] who had specialised in Nyāya. Gadādhara's father was

9. R. Jha, Op. Cit., p. 3; D. C. Bhattacharya, Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute, Vol. VI, p. 241.

10. यथा काली तथा तारा या तारा कालिकैव सा ।
उभयोर्नहि भेदोऽस्ति ।
इति गन्धर्वतन्त्रवचनात् कालीविधिरपि निरूप्यते ।।

11. आसीत् कीर्तिकरस्ततो हरिहरस्तस्मादभूत् सत्कविः
श्रीमान् पण्डितपुङ्गवो रुचिकरः श्रीकृष्णशर्मा ततः ।
तस्मादेव गदाधरः समभवत् तर्काम्बुधेः पारग-
स्ताराभक्तिसुधार्णवं समतनोत् तन्नन्दनः कौतुकात् ।।

12. The introduction to the edition of the Tārābhakti wrongly refers to Narasimha as the disciple of Gadādhara evidently on the basis of the expression Gadādharagurormuktā occuring in the introductory portion of the work. In the light of the definite statement in the concluding verse the word guru carrying many senses would here mean father and not preceptor.

Kṛṣṇa Sarman who was the son of Rucikara, a great scholar and a poet. Rucikara's father was Harihara, son of Kīrtikara. It is stated Narasiṃha hailed from a line of the family to which Devanātha belonged. Devanātha was Narasiṃha's senior by two generations. A commentary on the *Tārābhaktisudhārṇava*, presumably the work of Narasiṃha, by one Badrinātha Upādhyāya ( 19th century ) has been mentioned.[13] Narasiṃha is stated to have written one more work, a commentary on the *Kāvyaprakāśa* entitled *Narasiṁhamanisā*.[14] *Tārābhakti* appears to be his *magnum opus* in which he has referred to and quoted from numerous authors and works, an alphabetical list of which not given in the edition is appended below. The list has been prepared on the basis of the printed edition which, as already mentioned above, contains only about half the portion of the work.

अगस्त्य—१३८.
अगस्त्यसंहिता—२१-२, २५, ५६, ७०, १३६, २६१, ३२२, ३२८, ३३४.
अत्रि—७८.
अथर्व—१३७.
आगमकल्पद्रुम—१६.
आगमसिद्धान्त—७३.
आचार्य—६१, ६८.
आदिभाग—५४.
आम्नायरहस्य—५०.
ईशानशिव—३२.
उड्डीश—७८-८०, ८६-६२, १५७, २०३.
उत्तरतन्त्र—१४२, १४४, १४६, २२६, २२८, २३१-२, २४६, ३२५-६.
उदयाकर—२७६.
उमामहेश्वरसंवाद—२२७.
एकवीराकल्प—३१५, ३८३, ४२२.
कर्मोपदेशिनी—१६३.
कात्यायन—८३.
कादिमत—३३.
कामिक—४६.
कारण—२०, २३.
कालिक—४०६.
कालिकाक्रम—१७४.
कालिकार्णव—१३४.
कालिकापुराण—१४६, १७८-६, २०६-१० ४०६.
कालिकोद्भव—३२०.
कालीकल्प—११७, २०६-७, ३१६.
कालीतत्त्वकृत:—१३७.
कालीतन्त्र—११३, १४५, १७१, १८१, २३४, ३३७-८, ३४०, ३५२.
कालोत्तर—२०-२२, २२६.
कुब्जिकातन्त्र—२३०.
कुमारीक—१४३.
कुमारीकल्प—१३३-४, १४१, १४६, १४६,

13. S. N. Singh, History of Tirhut, p. 114.
14. Ramanath Jha, Bhumika to the edition of the Mantrakaumudi, p. 2.

*Mantrapradīpa*,[15] a work complete in 15 chapters and dealing with the details of the worship of various deities was composed by Harpati Āgamācārya, son of Mahāmahopādhyāya Śrī Rucipati. Harapati wrote under orders of Lakṣmīnātha Deva Kaṃsanārāyaṇa (16th century). The author lived in a village named Vaijolī and his ancestral home was in the village Khanāla.

Kumāra Gadādhara, son of Rāghavendra, grandson of Dhīrasiṃha and great grandson of Darpanārāyaṇa wrote a commentary on the famous *Śāradātilaka* under the title *Tantrapradīpa*. The work was com-

---

15. S. N. Singh, History of Tirhut, p. 79. R. L. Mitra, Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts, Vol. VI, No. 2011.

posed at a time when Rāmabhadra (end of 15th century), son of Bhairava Siṃha was ruling.[16] We are told that both Rāghavendra and Bhairavendra were charitably disposed and removed the poverty of subjects.[17] The manuscript of the work described by Mitra[18] is fairly old, if not contemporaneous with the author. It is dated 1493 Ś. E. (=1571 A. D.).

*Sadhakamaṇḍana* and *Bhavānībhaktimodikā* are two small works of authors, presumably of Mithilā, about whom very little is known. Only known manuscripts of the works are preserved in the library of the Mithila Research Institute. The works seem to belong to the leftist form of worship ( *Vīrācāra* and *Kulācāra* ). The name of the author of the first work is Cūḍāmaṇi and that of the second work is Śrīśānnātha. The *Sādhakamaṇḍana* begins by quoting from the *Tārāpradīpa* two verses[19] which define the comparative jurisdiction of the Vedas, Purāṇas and the Tantras. The Tantras are meant for the Kali age and for persons enga-

---

16. प्राभूद् भूदेवराजो जितरिपुनृपतिर्दर्पनारायणाख्य–
स्तस्यापि द्वौ तनूजौ हरिहरविभवौ रामसौमित्रमित्रौ ।
तत्र श्रीधीरसिंहः कृतमदन..............कनीयान्
पारीन्द्रो येन सद्योद्रुतविपुलमदो द्रावितो वारणेन्द्रः ।।
श्रीधीरसिंह..........श्रीराघवेन्द्रः सुरपादपोऽभूत् ।
..........................................................
भूपः श्रीरामभद्रो धरणिसुरतरुर्भैरवेन्द्रात्मजन्मा–
क्षौणीमेतामिदानीं चतुरुदधि[पयः]पूरसीमां प्रशास्ति ।।
श्रीराघवेन्द्रप्रभवप्रभावी गदाधरो नाम कुमारराजः ।
श्रीशारदायास्तिलकप्रकाशं तन्त्रप्रदीपं समपूरि धीरः ।।
श्रीधीरसिंहात्मजराघवेन्द्रतनूप्रसूतस्य गदाधरस्य ।
तन्त्रप्रदीपे समपूरि पञ्चविंशप्रकाशो भुवनप्रकाशः ।।

17. Rāghavendra is called dāridryavidrāvana and Surapādapa and Bhairavendra as dharanisurataru ( Vide introductory and concluding verses ).

18. Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts, Vol. IV, No. 2172.

19. प्रणम्य सम्यग् गुरुपादपङ्कजं सहस्रपत्रान्तरमद्य सङ्गते ।
उद्धृत्य चूडामणिनागमादि विधीयते साधकमण्डनं मुदा ।।
ताराप्रदीपे––
कृते श्रुत्युदितो मार्गस्त्रेतायां श्रुतिभारते ।
द्वापरे तु पुराणोक्तः कलावागमसंभवः ।।
अशुद्धा शूद्रकर्माणो ये नराः कलिसंभवाः ।
तेषामागममार्गेण सिद्धिर्न श्रौतवर्त्मना ।।

ged in works befitting Śūdras or low-class people. It ends by emphasizing the identity of the various deities having different names.[20] The *Bhavānībhaktimodikā* has five chapters called *ānandas* or joys. The work begins[21] with an eulogistic reference to the literature of the kula as distinguished from other forms of worship. It puts emphasis on *Japa* ( Muttering of mantras ) and worship proper ignoring all other rituals and different opinions of different teachers.

---

20. यद्यप्येते प्रयोगाः कालीं तारां वाधिकृत्य प्रोक्ताः, तमागम ।
यथा काली तथा नीला यथा नीला तथोन्मुखी ।
यथोन्मुखी तथा दुर्गा नाम्नां भेदोऽस्ति कुत्रचित् ।।
इति तन्त्रवचनादिति । अन्यत्र ग्रन्थगौरवभयान्नास्माभिर्लिखितम् ।।
आलोक्य तन्त्राणि विभाव्य मार्गं शैवेश्वराणां गदितं गुरूणाम् ।
चूडामणेर्यल्लिखितं मिताक्षरं तत् साधकानां वितनोतु मोदम् ।।

21. प्रणम्य पार्वतीनाथं स्वगुरुं च विनायकम् ।
ईशान्नाथः करोत्येनां भवानीभक्तिमोदिकाम् ।।
कुलार्णवे—
सर्वेभ्यश्चोत्तमा वेदा वेदेभ्यो वैष्णवं परम् ।
वैष्णवादुत्तमं कौलं कौलइत् परतरं न हि ।।
कौलं कुलधर्मप्रतिपादकं शास्त्रं भवानीभक्तियुक्तमित्यर्थः ।
विहाय सर्वधर्मांश्च नानागुरुमतानि च ।
जपार्चामेव जानीयान्नान्यचिन्ता विधीयते ।।